25. (Amended) A method of embedding auxiliary information in data, wherein the auxiliary information is not lost with compression of the data, the data initially comprising a non-compressed form including the auxiliary information embedded therein, and wherein combined data comprises the non-compressed form including the auxiliary information, said method comprising:

(a) retrieving the auxiliary information from the combined data;

(b) compressing the combined data; and

(c) embedding the auxiliary information in the compressed combined data, whereby the compressed combined data comprises the auxiliary information embedded therein.

26. (Amended) A method of embedding auxiliary information in data, wherein the auxiliary information is not lost with decompression of the data from a compressed form to a non-compressed form, and wherein the compressed form includes the auxiliary information, said method comprising:

(a) retrieving the auxiliary information from the compressed form;

(b) decompressing the compressed form to yield the non-compressed form; and

(c) steganographically embedding the auxiliary information in the non-compressed form, whereby the non-compressed form of the data comprises the auxiliary information embedded therein.

32. (Amended) The method of claim 26 wherein the decompressing comprises decoding.

33. (Amended) A method comprising:

retrieving auxiliary information from a data signal, wherein the auxiliary information is encoded in the data signal, and wherein the auxiliary information is retrieved from the data signal while the data signal comprises a non-compressed form;

compressing the data signal; and

embedding the retrieved auxiliary information in the compressed data signal, wherein the compressed data signal comprises the retrieved auxiliary information.

34. (Amended) The method of claim 33, wherein the retrieved auxiliary information is steganographically retrieved from the non-compressed data signal.

35. (Amended) The method of claim 34, wherein the retrieved auxiliary information is embedded in the compressed data signal in the form of a steganographic watermark.

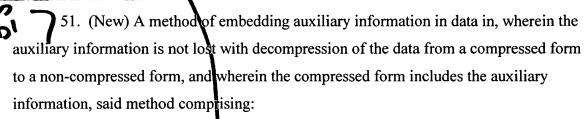37. (Amended) A method comprising:

retrieving auxiliary information from a data signal, wherein the auxiliary information is encoded in the data signal, and wherein the auxiliary information is retrieved from the data signal while the data signal comprises a compressed form;

decompressing the compressed data signal to yield a de-compressed data signal; and

embedding the retrieved auxiliary information in the de-compressed data signal, wherein the decompressed data signal comprises digital data, whereby the de-compressed data signal comprises the auxiliary information embedded therein.

*Please add new claim 51 as follows:

51. (New) A method of embedding auxiliary information in data in, wherein the auxiliary information is not lost with decompression of the data from a compressed form to a non-compressed form, and wherein the compressed form includes the auxiliary information, said method comprising:

(a) retrieving the auxiliary information from the compressed form;

(b) decompressing the compressed form to yield the non-compressed form; and

(b) embedding the auxiliary information in the non-compressed form, wherein the non-compressed form of the data comprises the auxiliary information embedded therein, and wherein the non-compressed form including the auxiliary information embedded therein comprises digital data.